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3 January 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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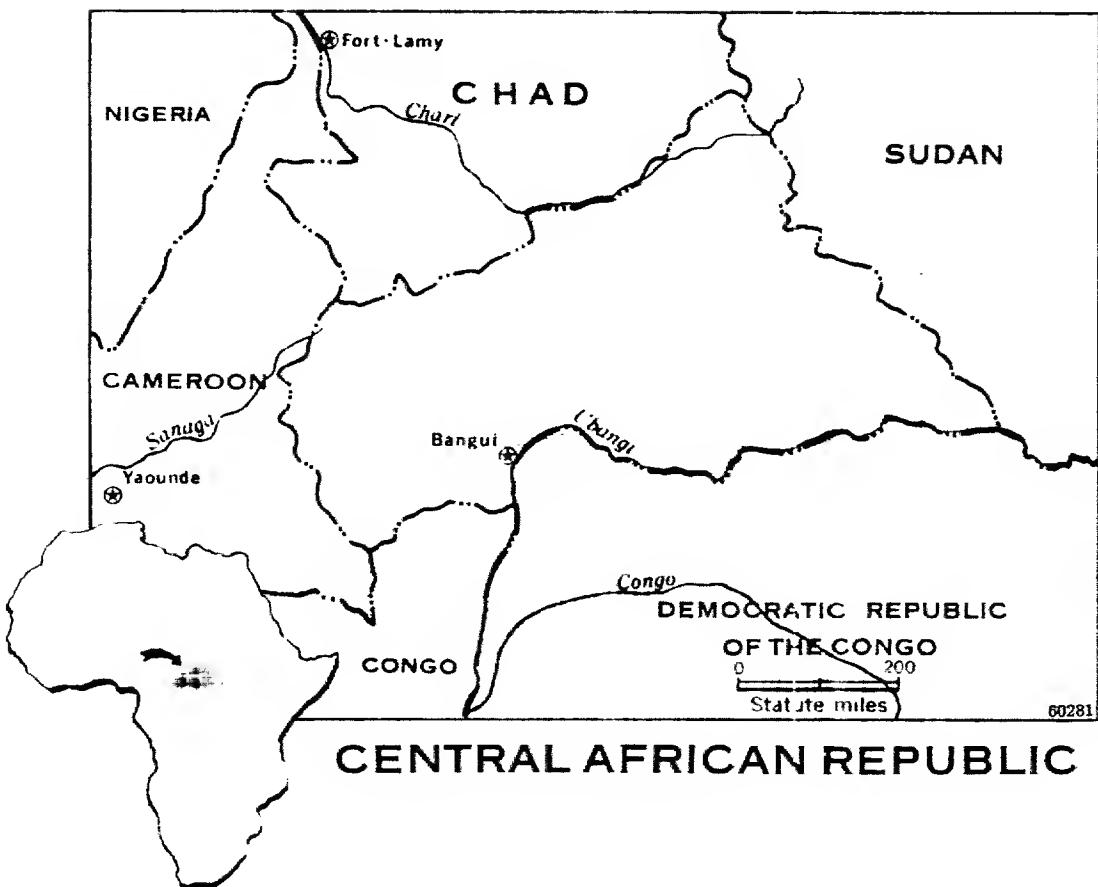
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Central African Republic: Army chief Bokassa's sudden overthrow of moderate President Dacko on 1 January has probably ushered in an extended period of political turmoil in the Central African Republic (CAR).

For the present, Bangui, the capital city of this extremely underdeveloped ex-French colony, is quiet on the surface and the pro-French, anti-Communist Bokassa appears to be in control. However, the US Embassy reports uncertainty and tension among both Europeans and Africans as they await Bokassa's attempts to form a new government. The provinces have not yet reacted to the army coup and could pose a problem to the new regime, especially in areas where elements of the rival--and more professionally effective--gendarmerie are deployed.

An immediate danger is that the ill-disciplined 450-man army may degenerate, despite efforts by Bokassa to keep it in check, into a drunken rabble and a threat to public safety. Some incidents of harassment of civilians and disorderly conduct by soldiers have already occurred.

Also problematical is Bokassa's ability to control the political train he has set in motion--apparently almost singlehandedly--in order to forestall threatened cuts in the army budget and an anticipated diminution of his command authority. He has never demonstrated much executive ability [redacted]

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[redacted] and is evidently widely disliked by subordinate officers, some of whom formally sought his removal in 1963. In this situation radical domestic elements, which Dacko was having increasing difficulty restraining, may turn out to be the principal ultimate beneficiaries of Bokassa's rash action.

The French, who provide vital economic and technical aid, appear to have been genuinely surprised by the coup and, at this time, uncertain as to how to react. [redacted]

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India-Pakistan: Little progress toward settlement of major differences appears likely during the Tashkent meetings, scheduled to begin tomorrow, between Indian Prime Minister Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan.

There is no formal agenda for the conference and its length has not been fixed. Shastri apparently expects the conference to last five to eight days as he is now planning to begin a visit to Afghanistan between 9 and 12 January.

Indians and Pakistanis agree that the initial meeting tomorrow will largely determine the final results of the conference. Neither government wants a resumption of hostilities and both appear to be seeking some form of modus vivendi. The Indians reportedly will propose at an early session the signing of a no-war pact without preconditions of any kind. Ayub, in his mid-December address to the UN General Assembly, proposed signing a no-war pact with India but only after the residents of Kashmir were permitted to exercise their right of self-determination. India steadfastly refuses to consider a plebiscite for the disputed territory.

Agreement between the two leaders on key problems, such as Kashmir or troop withdrawal from the present front between India and West Pakistan, appears unlikely. Neither Indian nor Pakistani leaders, however, appear prepared to accept total failure of the conference and the USSR, having committed its prestige, presumably would hope to see the conference record some progress toward a settlement.

Moscow has exerted some pressure on the two governments to adopt conciliatory positions.

Under such circumstances, it would appear that agreement is possible on less inflammatory issues such

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as normalization of diplomatic and economic relations, release of prisoners, and consolidation of the existing cease-fire. Progress on movement along these lines at Tashkent could prepare the way for further talks on more difficult problems.

U Thant's military representative in India-Pakistan, General Marambio, has announced that the first of a series of meetings between senior Indian and Pakistani officers to discuss the withdrawal question will be held today in Lahore, Pakistan. Hope for success in his effort to reach agreement on withdrawal of troops to lines occupied before the August-September hostilities will depend heavily on the outcome at Tashkent.

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NOTES

USSR-US: Moscow may have decided to lift the ban on the travel of US military attachés in the Soviet Union. The US defense attaché in Moscow reports that the Soviets have approved a trip request for 3 January--the first approval since the travel restrictions took effect on 18 November. Publication of the Penkovsky papers was originally given as the reason for the travel stand-down. The Soviets later alleged that new controls placed on procurement of publications by Soviet military attachés in Washington prevented an earlier removal of the ban.

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Zambia-Rhodesia: [Zambian President Kaunda, still anxious to move ahead with the UK and US in a total economic blockade of Rhodesia, has refused Prime Minister Smith's unexpected New Year's offer both to allow petroleum shipments for Zambia to transit Rhodesia and to rescind "for the time being" the Rhodesian surtax on coal exported to Zambia. American officials in Salisbury note that Smith undoubtedly sought some international credit for his "reasonableness." They also believe that a major factor behind Smith's offer is the growing concern in Rhodesian official circles lest a serious deterioration of the Zambian economy deepen the crisis in the region to the detriment of Rhodesia.]

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Bolivia: The military junta has announced that national elections will be held on 3 July 1966 with inauguration of the new government to take place on 6 August. With the election date finally set, disunity within the armed forces should be reduced, and the position of moderate politicians strengthened vis-a-vis those who advocate the overthrow of the junta as the only alternative to prolonged military rule.

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*Cuba: In his speech yesterday on the seventh anniversary of the Cuban revolution and on the eve of the Tri-Continent Conference, Fidel Castro concentrated on Cuba's continuing economic problems. He revealed that Peking would no longer exchange rice for Cuban sugar because of "economic and strategic reasons," creating a crucial rice shortage for Cuba in 1966. Castro's timing for the announcement may have been calculated to embarrass the Chinese as the conference opens.

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